



TOILET LEARNING AND THE TODDLER

Toileting And the Toddler

Toilet learning can be a rewarding experience for all, as well as challenging for the child, parent, and caregiver alike. Waiting until the child is capable of recognizing when his bladder is full or is able to hold a bowel movement allows the child to be ready for toilet learning. The pace of each child's learning will vary from child to child. Knowing what to expect can help lessen anxieties and make the learning fun! The following information discusses children's development related to toilet learning, the importance of home/child care communication when toileting, and some helpful toileting hints.

These behaviors may indicate when a child is ready for toilet learning:

1. The child will have a bowel movement at a regular time.
2. The child wakes up dry from a nap and is dry most nights.
3. The child can hold urine for longer periods of time.
4. The child is around the age of 2 or older.

If a child exhibits these indicators, then parents and caregivers may wish to discuss starting toilet learning. It also helps if a child shows an interest in toileting. A child must physically be capable of recognizing the internal signals that s/he is about to have a bowel movement or urinate, as well as perform the actions of holding on or expelling. Toilet learning is very individualized.

A positive relaxed approach is best, so remember:

1. Praise accomplishments and expect frequent "accidents." Mistakes will and do happen for a period of time after toilet learning. Remain calm and patient.

2. Expect lapses, especially when a child is sick, tired, or really involved in an activity.

As stated before, parents and caregivers should discuss if the child is ready to start toilet learning. A team approach is most helpful, with as many similarities between the home and child care toileting procedures as possible.

Some helpful tips . . .

1. Have specific times when the child will try to eliminate. Success is most likely after meals, after nap and when the child has been dry for several hours.
2. Figures out if there is a pattern of elimination (always 'goes' about 9:00 and 11:30).
3. Let the child know of the upcoming event. "After you put that piece in the puzzle, it will be your bathroom turn."

Ideals To Make Toileting Time Easier For Both The Child As Well As The Parent Or Caregiver:

Decorate the Bathroom

Make the bathroom look inviting to the children. Try adding decorations such as colorful pictures, wind chimes, or mobiles.

Acknowledge Children's Fears

Let children practice sitting on the toilet without pressure. **Flushing:** Some children might be afraid of the flushing action of the toilet. Let the child practice flushing pieces of toilet paper. This is an easy way for the child to get used to the noise and the sight of things disappearing in the toilet.

Falling In: Have a potty chair, toilet seat adapter, or step stool available for the child to use. This will help them to feel more secure.

Recognize Successes

Praise, Praise, Praise: When a child gets a positive reaction to something she has done, she will be more likely to repeat that action. This holds true for toilet training, too. Initially just sitting quietly on the toilet can be as successful as 'going.' Praise the child for this as well as when she has successfully used the toilet. But don't reprimand her if she wasn't successful.

Accidents will happen even after it appears that the child has learned toileting. Treat temporary setbacks as unfortunate happenings, NOT big mistakes! Allow the child to share his successes with his parents. Have the child greet his parent at pick up and share the good news.

How to Pass the Time

Stories: Have some of the child's favorite books in the bathroom. Read these books only when the child is sitting on the toilet. And be sure to remember the supervision of the other children as you read.

Talking: This is good to try in child care facilities, but can also be used in homes. Invite more than one child in the bathroom. While one of

the children is taking their bathroom turn, initiate a casual conversation. Make the topic light and interesting. This takes some of the pressure off of the child. Remember: Toileting is an excellent time for parents and children or caregivers and children to have some quiet time with each other to talk.

Games

Target Practice: This is easier for boys. Drop an ice cube in the toilet. Have the child 'aim' for the ice cube.

Incentives

Let's Call Mom/Dad!: Have the child call one of his parents and give them the good news.

Big Girl/Big Boy Pants: Allow the child to pick out and wear "big girl/big boy" pants when they are successful and are beginning to graduate from diapers to underpants.

Sweet Treats: Have a cup of M&M's (or another little candy) in the bathroom. Give the child some of the candy after they have successfully used the toilet. (some people prefer not to reward with candy, while others find it a good way to start toilet training.)

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